United Nations E/AC.51/2017/L.4/Add.21

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
30 June 2017

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-seventh session
5-30 June 2017
Agenda item 7
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-seventh session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation
(*Item 3 (b)*)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. At its 4th meeting, on 6 June 2017, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the Evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (E/AC.51/2017/2).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and, together with representatives of OIOS and UNHCR, responded to questions raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed appreciation for the report of OIOS and for the work undertaken by UNHCR in challenging circumstances, such as the mixed settings of refugees and internally displaced persons covered by the report. Delegations noted with appreciation the conclusion contained in the report that the engagement of UNHCR with internally displaced persons had not affected its ability to deliver on its refugee mandate, and a number of delegations expressed support for the recommendations reflected in the report. A delegation noted the importance of the work carried out by UNHCR in upholding human rights. Several delegations emphasized the different nature of internally displaced persons and refugees and the different legislative frameworks guiding the two categories, and reaffirmed State sovereignty and responsibility for internally displaced persons.

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4. The need for UNHCR to always abide by its mandates as provided by the relevant resolutions of intergovernmental bodies and by its statute was emphasized, as was the need for it to act in full respect for national sovereignty. In particular, it was stressed that UNHCR must seek engagement with countries of origin and that the vetting process for protection must be fully adhered to.

5. Delegations expressed concerns regarding the protracted nature of refugee and internally displaced persons crises and the growing numbers of displaced people. They also noted some of the constraints faced in dealing with those situations, including security concerns and lack of political will. Also discussed was the fact that the achievement of durable solutions was the lowest-rated area of UNHCR work noted in the report, and it was emphasized that UNHCR must work with development actors and countries of origin to address the root causes of protracted crises. The question of how to distinguish the work of UNHCR from that of other entities that worked in the area of development was raised, as was that of whether long-term refugees constituted an emergency situation or a sustainable development issue.

6. Several delegations acknowledged resource limitations with regard to activities of UNHCR and information was sought on whether the fact that 99 per cent of its budget came from voluntary contributions had an impact on its activities (see E/AC.51/2017/2, para. 13). Information was also sought on the needs-based approach to budgeting, including details on how needs were identified and quantified and whether the needs-based budget of UNHCR was accurate or potentially exaggerated.

7. On the question of monitoring, several delegations raised concerns regarding the lack of data on out-of-camp refugees (ibid., para. 24), and one asked whether in the absence of such data, UNHCR and OIOS could support the claim that living out of camps improved resilience. Further detail was sought about the monitoring by UNHCR of its planning and exit stages. Delegations further noted limitations in the work carried out by UNHCR in collecting and providing feedback from beneficiaries and asked for further details about the process, including whether UNHCR had the means to evaluate the intermediaries it used for the provision of services.

8. A delegation referred to paragraphs 27 and 47 of the report and sought clarification on perspectives on UNHCR performance, notably with regard to durable solutions and information-sharing. Information was sought regarding UNHCR coordination arrangements with United Nations system partners, including the United Nations Development Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and civil society, as well as the effectiveness of such arrangements. Delegations encouraged effective coordination within the United Nations system to address the complex challenges faced in mixed refugee and internally displaced persons settings. One delegation requested that UNHCR and OCHA track and report on the implementation of the 2014 "Joint UNHCR-OCHA note on mixed situations: coordination in practice". Clarification was sought on the suggestion of a non-governmental co-lead for the protection cluster in some contexts. A delegation sought clarification regarding figure III in the report, notably in reference to the Lake Chad region.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly take note of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 65 to 68 of the report of OIOS on the evaluation of UNHCR (E/AC.51/2017/2), taking into account that those recommendations were presented in the context of mixed settings.**

10. The Committee noted the challenges faced by UNHCR and its partners in managing the expectations of persons of concern and in improving communication with them. Further to recommendation 2 set out in paragraph 67 of the report, the Committee acknowledged the existing positive practice of UNHCR and its partners in proactively engaging persons of concern and recommended that the General Assembly encourage UNHCR to devise pragmatic, efficient and situation-tailored measures to alleviate those perceived gaps with a view to ensuring proper accountability and easing the frustration of persons of concern with respect to unmet needs.

11. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly recommend that, when carrying out its activities, UNHCR act fully in accordance with its mandate.

12. The Committee recalled that the current activities of UNHCR related to internally displaced persons should not undermine the refugee mandate of the Office and the institution of asylum and noted that OIOS had found that, for the most part, the involvement of UNHCR with internally displaced persons in mixed settings did not appear to affect its mandated activities for refugees in the case studies evaluated in recent years. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly take note of this finding.